



# East Windsor Fire Protection Committee

## Special Meeting Minutes

July 28, 2016

7:00 PM

Park Hill

1A Park Hill Road, Broad Brook CT 06016

### Opening

The special meeting of the, East Windsor Fire Protection Committee is called to order at 7:00pm on 7/28/2016 by John Burnham.

### Present

John Burnham (Warehouse Point Fire Commission), Mike Balf (Warehouse Point Fire Commission), Bob Maynard (Board of Selectman), Dale Nelson (Board of Selectman), Thomas Arcari (Broad Brook Fire Department), Charlie Miller (at large for District), Steve Smith (Board of Finance), Absent Nick Macsata (Broad Brook Fire Department)

The nine members East Windsor Fire Protection Committee appointed by the Board of Selectman are the following:

John Burnham –Chairman of the Warehouse Point Fire Commission

Mike Balf -Warehouse Point Fire Commission

Bob Maynard -First Selectman, Board of Selectman

Dale Nelson -Board of Selectman

Thomas Arcari –Chief of Broad Brook Fire Department

Charlie Miller -at large for District

Steve Smith -Board of Finance

Nick Macsata -Broad Brook Fire Department

Open Position –At large 06016

A motion made to appoint John Burnham to the position of Chairman for the East Windsor Fire Protection Committee Mike Balf, Bob Maynard Second. -All in favor

Bob Maynard made a motion to appoint Jill Caron to the position of Secretary of the East Windsor Fire Protection Committee Charlie Miller, Tom Arcari Second. -All in favor

A motion made to appoint Dale Nelson to the position of Vice Chairman for the East Windsor Fire Protection Committee John Burnham, Steve Smith Second. -All in favor

-Dale Nelson had all the members present on the committee stand as they sworn in.

-Meetings will be on the second and third Tuesday of the month. Next meeting will be August 9, 2016 at 7pm

-There were 2 previous meetings held unofficially while the committee was being formed

### Public Comment:

Claud Cloutier 3 Steeple Chase Road:

A few questions:

1. Who determines 1.2-mill rate?
2. What control do the community people have over the budget and how it is spent?
3. Where did the money that the town did not pay the fire district go and we should get a credit on Jan 1<sup>st</sup> for the double tax.
4. Military and seniors should get the discount on the fire tax just as they do on the regular town tax. This town needs one fire department, the people need to have a vote to dissolve district 1. People do NOT want to be double taxed.

Lee Harrington Steeple Chase Road:

The Fire tax is discrimination! Bob Maynard said he would not raise the taxes and now my bill is higher due to the fire tax. Who collects the fire tax? Who will be in charge of the money?

## **New Business:**

1. Current tax 2016-2017
2. Tax 2017-2018

Steve Smith- John please give us a dialog of the current tax situation.

John Burnham- In 1911 the Fire District was formed and collected taxes; in 1975 they discontinued taxing and were funded by the town of EW. The town promised to pay for the funding of the district and all of its assets. A few years ago the BOS said they would no longer fund repair/improvement to building/properties they do not own. This has forced the District to resume taxing, allowing the District to maintain the buildings and properties of the WHPFD. This has been in the works for 18 months or longer. The intention was to make a fair taxing situation for the entire town. The current outcome has left the WHPFD paying a double tax for fire protection; it is the mission of the committee to correct that.

4 current options on the table:

1. One Fire District for the entire town. WHPFD-BBFD
2. Put the equal amount of BBFD costs back in the budget
3. Special service taxing district
4. Dissolve the district and make a town department.

Option 1: The district would be called East Windsor Fire District. There would be an annual meeting where the entire town would vote on the members of the commission and the budget. Increase the commission from 6 to 9. The district gets audited annually.

Option 3 would be very costly to the town. John Burnham has asked that all the members of the committee take home a pros/cons sheet for every option and really think about them for the next meeting.

John Burnham encourages everyone to submit any question or concerns in writing. We need a plan, after polling the audience, most are in favor of one district.

Dick Pippen: One fire Department under the control of the town

Victor DeCapua: The history of the town and fire departments need to be discussed

Bob Maynard: We need a detailed description of each option; the special service district could be done by a town ordinance. Consulting a lawyer may be needed.

The 4 options are just a starting point.

Steve Smith: 3 important things

1. Legal
2. Financial impact
3. Democratic process

John Burnham: everything will be run by both town lawyer and the district lawyer, there will be democratic process, and BB would have a vote.

Dale: currently there is unequal taxation; our charge is to find the best way to fix that. A report to the town needs to be done by October 1<sup>st</sup>

Bob: Broad Brook would have to vote for one district. WHPFD would have to vote to dissolve itself.

Tom: No comment

Charlie: No comment

Mike Balf: Glad it is a big turnout of members of the community.

Chairman of the committee is permitted to talk to the town lawyer. Carl will take a look at the options and design a road map of how to get each option done.

## Public Comment

James Barton (WHPFD Chief)-

- This has been a process for over three years
- No capital improvement money for the districts needs
- Town has been funding us for just over 200,000.00
- Town lawyer said it would be best if the District resumed taxing
- The Warehouse Point Fire Department works great with the Broad Brook Fire Department
- Best was to deliver fire protection is by having one fire district
- The board of commissioner could better service the needs of the community with one fire district
- East Windsor Fire District could have better checks and balances of the fire protection needs of the town.
  - One board of commissioners
  - Local government is the best form of government
- The WHPFD had a few informational meeting and pizza parties and we will do more in the future
- The district had to resume taxing to be properly funded

Claud- How much control would the district people have?

John Burnaham- More control than they currently have, everyone would have a vote

Will Harrington- The notices in the newspaper were not enough. Mailings should have been done

Vic DeCapua- The district had been trying for many years to maintain the buildings within our operating budget which is not enough

Bill Lous-

- 60 year member of the BB department
- BB has always had funding from the town
- Started getting funding after town hall burned down
- BB does not own the trucks or the building town owns them
- WHPFD owns everything and pays there officers
- WHPFD should turn everything over to the town, people need to start showing up to all the meetings
- Dissolve the district and then the town would maintain all the buildings

Dick Pippin- Chief Barton said they will not fund capital improvements and that is wrong. Everything has a priority; the town charter state the town cannot fund the buildings if they do not own them. The town does not need 2 fire Chiefs, 2 Fire Marshals. I don't think you need one district. This should be done at a referendum.

Ken Crous- the Fire Service is in for more trouble down the road with lack of volunteers. The town does not need to reinvent the wheel, look into other towns that have done this and save time/money.

Steve-Bob Maynard said he would not raise taxes and now I am paying additional taxes for the fire service in WHP. Both departments do a great job.

Claud-The tax does hurt some people who cannot afford to pay and are on a fixed income. Please work this out and make it fair.

Jim Barton( father of Fire Chief James Barton, former commissioner of WHPFD)- Purpose of the committee is to address the inequity and make it fair.

- The WHPFD had agreements with the town which was fair to the entire town until town attorney said NO
- \$400,000.00 came out of the town budget which the town already backfilled with new spending
- Out of the 4 options I am in favor of 1 fire district for the entire town.
  - Problems in the future
    - Declining volunteerism
    - Building in need of repair/improvements
    - Paid staff
- If you let the funding for fire service get mixed up in the town budget it will get lost.

John Burnham-Next meeting August 9<sup>th</sup> at 7pm

- Talk to lawyers about
  - One district
  - Dissolving WHPFD
  - Funding back in the budget
  - Tax credit
- WHPFD tax is based on the assessment

Steve-Money was not taken in! WHPFD is sovereign government and should credit on its own.

Bob- WHP did a great job on the budget, everything is spelled out. I did not know a tire for a fire truck costs around 900.00. To send out a mailer to the entire town it costs about 2000.00, a referendum costs about 5000.00

Mike Balf- To put the money back in the budget was on the advice of the town attorney. The Board of Finance voted NO to put the money back in the budget 6-0.

Rich Austin- The budget for WHPFD is 598,000 and BB is 388,000. WHPFD has not been getting properly funded for over 25 years.

Claud- Mike good point, if the BOF voted to put the money back in the budget this could have all been resolved. The town made a big mistake.

John Burnham-Both Departments do a great job!

## **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 8:17 by John Burnham. The next general meeting will be at 7 on August 9, 2016, at Park Hill.

Minutes submitted by: Jill Caron